

12-28-1917

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-12-28, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

May-ling Soong Chiang

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.wellesley.edu/mills_chiang

Recommended Citation

Papers of Emma DeLong Mills, MSS.2, Wellesley College Archives.

This Letter is brought to you for free and open access by the Papers of Emma DeLong Mills (MSS.2) at Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Papers of Emma DeLong Mills: May-ling Soong Chiang by an authorized administrator of Wellesley College Digital Scholarship and Archive. For more information, please contact ir@wellesley.edu.

Letter from May-ling Soong Chiang, 1917-12-28, Shanghai, China, to Emma Mills

Transcription

491 Avenue Joffre
Shanghai, China
28 December, 1917

Dearest Dada:

Such a bunch of letters from America. And two from you & one from Ted. One from Grandma Mills, Grandpa Mills and some others from the South. I wish I had you here with me, for there are so many things to tell. First of all - what a Christmas!

My uncle, the father of that cousin of mine in Radcliffe has been dangerously ill. They thought he was going to die, and Mother has been over at Auntie's helping Auntie. He has two girls and two boys - and yet he lies dying with all of them either in America or Europe. And both the boys are doctors too! Oh, the irony of his fate seems too much to bear! His wife refuses to have him moved to the Hospital where the doctors think he may have a fighting chance. The Chinese doctors too have given up hope. My aunt refuses to have a trained nurse: instead she has a dozen Chinese women around him! The poor man is so ill - too ill to hear their silly, silly chatter. Auntie has seemed to have lost her head, and we can do nothing with her at all. Mother does what she can, - but Auntie is a very [page break] domineering sort. Last night they expected him to die, and were not the situation so pathetic, it could be actually ludicrous to see the mourning arrangements that are being made. They even have bought the lining of his coffin! We have all protested strongly against Auntie's policy: but have been told to get out of the home for our pains. The poor lady really is in a nervous state.

Of course with Mother away all the time, the household cares naturally fall on me. And worst of all, one of the cooks has left as his wife is expecting a baby. This leaves an awful lot for the other cook to do, especially as the market's quite far away. Then on top of everything, our motor is still in the garage having the winter top put on, and as Mother takes the carriage off to Auntie's every morning, I have had to resort to the cold cold rickshaws to get all the Xmas tree fixings and presents for the children and servants.

You have no idea how cold a rickshaw is in the winter time. The [page break] bottom where your feet rest is made of wooden slots with large openings across, and when the wind whistles through your legs - oh my!

Well, you know, I do not know Shanghai at all except to order the chauffeur or the groom where I want to go. Now a rickshaw coolie has to have more explicit directions, and as most of them are from the country, and speak a "Cockney" Shanghai dialect, I had great difficulty in making them understand. The shops were so crowded and there were so many things to buy.

[N.B. Dad has just come in, and he said that evidently your letters must be an inspiration to me for scribbling, as immediately after your letters come, he always finds me writing.]

Well to resume, usually the chauffeur goes through the stores carrying my packages. But these past two weeks I had to [page break] do that myself, and I was so jostled that I almost became angry.

Christmas in our family is a great

event for the servants: so as Mother could not buy the things, I had to. I bought handkerchiefs, socks, stockings and candy, oranges, tangerines, candy, cokes etc. until I thought I would go crazy, for each servant had to have a different size stocking. After buying the things, the stockings had to be filled, and the other things tied into pretty little packages. I almost went dizzy tying and tying things. I surely did wish for Ted then, for she loves to tie things up.

After the servants' things, and getting the tree decoration, there were my little brother and cousins' presents to think of. They all seemed to have every plaything imaginable: therefore it was difficult to find novel toys. I went out every day to shop for two weeks, and sometimes twice a day!

The Chinese exchange is a very queer thing. For instance we have "little money" and "big money." A dollar in "little money" is 11 dimes and 2 coppers, whereas [page break] in "big money", it is ten dimes. Again in "big money" a dime is ten coppers, whereas in "little money" it is 12 coppers and five cash. Some stores deal in big money only and some in little money. It all is very confusing. For instance if you buy an article in one store and it costs 90 cents, nine dimes would suffice, while in another store you would have to give them a dollar and only get a dime in change. And then another funny thing, if the article is only 30 cents, you can just give them 3 dimes, and that would suffice, whereas if you were to buy 50 cents more of something, eight dimes would not be enough.

The Oriental mind you see is complicated. When I first came home, I got cheated right and left, and I do

not doubt that even now I am
often at a disadvantage.

By the way, has Ling Ling sent you
any money to pay for my magazines.
If no, how much? [page break]
Well, to go back to Xmas, the house was full
of company, and the servants were busy
every minute washing up dishes or prepar-
ing food for company. I never have seen
such gourmands. You see Dad likes to
keep "Open House."

By the way, you said something about
my vociferous "damns" - Well, it is
damn, damn cold in this house!
In spite of all the fireplaces and
stoves going red-hot, - it is damn
cold! You see I have been used to
steam heat, - and in Shanghai no
one has steam heat. In spite of all
the ice, we have not had a bit
of snow.

Last week the house had to be
decorated, and the gardener certainly
did his best. It looks perfectly
lovely and artistic: not a bit over-
done, and very fragrant. The living
rooms at least are warm, for we
have two grates going and a large
open-stove (very goodlooking) and all [page break]
the doors shut: but the halls are the limit.

Xmas day - or rather evening we had
a party for the children, and the
servants. Of course the servants did
not liven up at all until they went to
the servants' quarters: but they did
seem to enjoy getting presents and
seeing the tree. We had about
20 little cousins yelling at the top of
their lungs and pulling fire-crackers.
We had them here for dinner that
night, and I was so afraid that
they would all die of "bursting."
By the way, Dada, we had the most

wonderful American turkey!

H.K. sent me a telegram, for he said
he had not heard from me for ages
and was worrying to death. For Xmas
he sent a carload of flowers. I haven't
written him yet. The war is killing
so many people that one more or
less dead doesn't make much difference,
does it?

My face is almost well now, and
I am enjoying myself. You know Mr. Yang [page break]
came to call several times, and each
time Mother informed him I was ill.
He then wrote me a very sarcastic
letter hoping that my "very temporary"
illness would soon be over. He meant
that I did not want to see him: hence
told him I was ill. Of course I became
furious, and refused to answer his
letters or telephone calls, - and this
is the card he sent me! He told
another man, who is one of our common
friends that I had treated him not
only without consideration: but with
actual contempt. Of course you understand,
I never did that, and I really
was ill: only his letter made me
furious.

What a long letter.
Goodby, Dada
Daughter

P.S. I got some beautiful brocades, silks and
very very old paintings for Xmas.



FOR KING

& FOR

COUNTRY

Let each man
do his level Best
that every wrong
may be Redressed

WITH KINDEST GREETINGS AND
SINCERE WISHES FOR A
CHRISTMAS OF PEACE AND GOOD-WILL

From

Sih-zung Yang

Dec. 23rd 1917



491 Avenue J
Shanghai, China.
28 December, 1917.

Dearest Dada:

Such a bunch of letters from America. And two from you & one from Ted. One from Grandma Mills, Grandpa Mills and some others from the South. Just I had you here with us, for there are so many things to tell. First of all - what a Christmas!

My uncle, the father of that cousin of mine in Radcliffe has been dangerously ill. They thought he was going to die, and Mother has been over at Auntie's helping Auntie. He has two girls and two boys - and yet he lies dying with all of them either in America or Europe. And both the boys are doctors too! Oh, the irony of his fate seems too much to bear! His wife refuses to have him moved to the hospital where the doctors think he may have a fighting chance. The Chinese doctors too have given up hope. My aunt refuses to have a trained nurse; instead she has a dozen Chinese women around him! The poor man is so ill - too ill to bear their silly, silly chatter. Auntie has seemed to have lost her head, and we can do nothing with her at all. Mother does what she can, - but Auntie is a very

domineering sort. Last night they expected him to die, and even now the situation is so pathetic, it would be actually ludicrous to see the mourning arrangements that are being made. They even have bought the lining of his coffin! We have all protested strongly against Auntie's policy; but have been told to get out of the house for our pains. The poor lady really is in a nervous state.

Of course with brother away at the time, the household cares naturally fall on me. And worst of all, one of the cooks has left as his wife is expecting a baby. This leaves an awful lot for the other cook to do, especially as the market is quite far away. Then on top of every thing, our water is shut in the garage having the winter top put on, and as brother takes the carriage off to Auntie's every morning, I have had to resort to the cold cold 'rickshaws' to get the Xmas tree fixings and presents for the children and servants.

You have no idea how cold a 'rickshaw' is in the winter time. The

bottom where your feet rest is made of wooden slats with large openings, across, and when the wind whistles through your legs — Oh my!

Well, you know, I do not know Shanghai at all except to order the chairmen, or the groom where I want to go. Even a rickshaw coolie has to have more explicit directions, and as most of them are from the country, and speak a "cockney" Shanghai dialect, I had great difficulty in making them understand. The shops were so crowded and there were so many things to buy.

[N.B. Dad has just come in, and he said that evidently your letters must be an inspiration to me for scribbling, as immediately after your letters come, he always finds me writing)

Well to resume, usually the chairmen goes through the stores carrying my packages. But this past two weeks I had to

do that myself, and I was so jostled that I almost became angry.

Christmas in our family is a great event for the servants; so as mother could not buy the things, I had to. I bought, handkerchiefs, socks, stockings and candy, oranges, tangerines, candy, cakes etc. until I thought I would go crazy, for each servant had to have a different size stocking. After buying the things, the stockings had to be filled, and the other things tied into pretty little packages. I almost went dizzy tying and tying things. I simply did wish for Ted then, for he loves to tie things up.

After the servants' things, and getting the tree decoration, there were my little brother and cousin's presents to think of. They all seemed to have every plaything imaginable; therefore it was difficult to find novel toys. I went out every day to shop for two weeks, and sometimes twice a day!

The Chinese exchange is a very queer thing. For instance we have "little money" and "big money." A dollar "little money" is 11 dimes and 2 coppers, whereas

3

in "big money", it is ten dimes. Again in "big money" a dime is ten coppers, whereas in "little money" it is 12 coppers and five cash. Some stores deal in big money only and some in little money. It all is very confusing. For instance if you buy an article in one store and it costs 90 cents, nine dimes would suffice, while in another store you would have to give them a dollar and only get a dime in change. And then another funny thing, if the article is only 30 cents, you can just give them 3 dimes, and that would suffice, whereas if you were to buy 50 cents worth of something, eight dimes would not be enough.

The Oriental mind you see is complicated. When I first came home, I got cheated right and left, and I do not doubt that even now I am often at a disadvantage.

By the way, has Bing Sing sent you any money to pay for my magazines. If so, how much?

we, ~~go~~ back to Xmas. The house was full of company, and the servants were busy every minute washing up dishes or preparing food for company. I never have seen such gourmards. You see Dad likes to keep "Open-House".

By the way, you said something about my vociferous "Darns" — well, it is damn, damn cold in this house! In spite of all the fire places and stones going red-hot, — it is damn cold! You see I have been used to steam heat, — and in Shanghai no one has steam heat. In spite of all the ice, we have not had a bit of snow.

Last week the house had to be decorated, and the Gardener certainly did his best. It looks perfectly lovely and artistic; not a bit overdone, and very fragrant. The living rooms at least are warm, for we have two grates going and a large open-stove (very good looking) and all

the doors shut; but the boys are the limit.
Xmas day - or rather morning we had
a party for the children, and the
servants. Of course the servants did
not live up at all until they went to
the servants' quarters; but they did
seem to enjoy getting presents and
seeing the tree. We had about
20 little cousins yelling at the top of
their lungs and pulling fire-crackers.
We had them here for dinner that
night, and I was so afraid that
they would all die of "bursting."
By the way, Dade, we had the most
wonderful American Turkey!

H.K. sent me a telegram, for he said
he had not heard from me for ages
and was worrying to death. So I was
to send a cartload of flowers. I haven't
written him yet. The war is killing
so many people that one more or
less dead doesn't make much diff-
erence, does it?

My face is almost well now, and
I am enjoying myself. You know how young

came to all ^{8.} several times, and each
time brother refused him. I was ill.
He then wrote me a very sarcastic
letter hoping that my "very temporary"
illness would soon be over. He meant
that I did not want to see him; hence
told him I was ill. Of course I became
furious, and refused to answer his
letters or telephone calls, — and this
is the card he sent me! He told
another man, who is one of our common
friends that I had treated him not
only without consideration; but with
actual contempt. Of course you und-
erstand, I never did that, and I really
was ill; only his letter made me
furious.

What a long letter.

Goodbye, Dad

Daughter

P.S.

I got some beautiful brocades, silks and
very very old paintings for A. Mas.